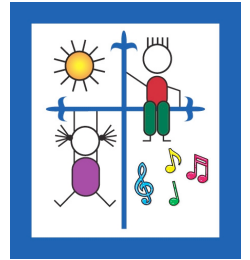




# CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

## BLOOMFIELD & GLEN RIDGE



*Growing in faith ~ Serving our neighbors ~ Creating community*

NEWSLETTER

CHRISTMAS 2024

## Reflections from The Rector

**The Rev. Diana L. Wilcox**



"Do not be afraid; for see-- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people!"

The world feels so very dark these days, and yet at Christmas we are reminded of the angels saying "Do not be afraid." For on that first Christmas – God responded to the darkness of humanity by becoming a part of it – the Word made flesh – dwelling among us – not to judge, not to punish – but to do one thing... tell all people that we are loved beyond measure just as we are.

And to make that even more clear, the message of the angels was brought first not to the rich and powerful – but to shepherds who lived on the margins. Shepherds, who sat in the cold of night keeping watch. Shepherds who had nothing but themselves, their

hearts, to offer to this new Christ child. Think about that – God enters this world as the child of an unwed teen, born in a humble setting. His birth is announced first to lowly shepherds.

Here's the thing, perhaps the reason that angels start out by saying "Do not be afraid," is because God enters into our lives most profoundly and deeply when things are not perfect, when we might be most afraid – afraid that God isn't listening, isn't there, or doesn't care, and with a message that will confound us, engage us, push us, while delivering us – whether we know it or not.

Jesus is born this Christmas – and every single night of our lives – that we may know that God never gives up on us. That we may know that God loves us – deeply, unconditionally, and for all time. That we, a people who walk in darkness, might see a great light – the glory of God shining brightly – for us – and share that with the world.

Glory to God in the highest, and by his light shining in us, may there be peace on earth for us all.

The story continues too, so I hope to see you in 2025 as we turn the page and continue to hear more about what Christmas really means for us, and for the world.

Merry Christmas!

*Mother Diana+*

# Blessings Abound

## The Rev. Deacon Jacqueline McLeod



My internship as seminarian at Christ Episcopal Church Bloomfield and Glen Ridge began July 2023 and ended when I was ordained a Deacon on April 13, 2024. I was then assigned by Bishop Hughes to serve here at least until April of 2025, and I couldn't be happier about it.

The deacon is called to a special ministry of servanthood directly under the bishop. According to the ordination of a deacon, "In the name of Jesus Christ, the deacon is to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick and the lonely." Even though the deacon serves under the supervision of the rector, the deacon promises to obey the bishop. Deacons are assigned by the bishop and are charged to bring to the congregation needs seen in the community/world. Deacons are to remind the congregation of the baptismal covenant that in serving others, we are serving Christ.

My responsibilities under the direction of Mother Diana were to assist in church ministry program services within the church and into the community. To that end I have:

- Participated in weekly worship services
- Led worship in Mother Diana's absence
- Proclaimed the gospel
- Set the table for communion
- Dismissed congregation at end of service
- Preached every 4 weeks or as needed
- Re-started the Healing Prayer Ministry
- Conducted Healing Prayer series based on healing stories in the Bible
- Led Morning Prayer
- Coordinated two-day food drives and Prison Ministry gifts for children.



My time at Christ Episcopal Church has been very valuable to me. It has been a learning and spiritual experience for me. Mother Diana and the parishioners are very warm and welcoming. I have been blessed with a wonderful enriching placement.

Merry Christmas to all!

Jackie McLeod, Deacon



# Continued Blessings

## By Our Wardens, Tom Reynolds and Michelle Ryndak

At our Fall Founder's Fest, we were visited by the Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Carlyle J. Hughes, making the day a long one for the vestry. We had a long conversation with her after the service and coffee hour where we discussed a lot of topics, but two I really want to share with you all.



One, that our parish is an important one to the diocese. We are situated in an area that is diverse and changing. We see that diversity in our pews every Sunday, in our Nursery School and in the other programs held in our building.



Bishop Hughes also spoke about how lonely people have been finding themselves, especially since the pandemic. There is a growing number of people who have been finding themselves lonely and seeking something. I know I see it often among my friends as they go from working from home, to raising families without the same villages they grew up with. She challenged us to go outside the walls of the building, because that is where we are needed.

I found myself like the Israelites when they began to be anxious and impatient in the wilderness.



They argued with Moses that there was no food, no water and they detest the miserable food. The wilderness makes appearances in the bible a few times. Each time coming from one place, maybe not a comfortable place, but a place that we know well. And each time a person is in the wilderness, they are tested. Their resolve is tested, their faith is tested, their belief system is tested. And when they come out of the wilderness, they are stronger than when they went into the wilderness.

I think we are in that moment, a wilderness moment. We all knew what church was for our entire lives. A place we go to for spiritual fulfillment, to meet with friends and extended family.

Church for me was the place I had piano lessons, where I got over my fear of public speaking, the place where I could exercise my talents. But my vision of church doesn't fit the future of our Church. I'm sure the vision many of us have of church doesn't exactly fit what is needed.



When have Mass on the Grass, when we gather groceries at the ShopRite, when we move outside the doors of the church, we begin to meet people where they are. And when we speak to someone new about what our service and faith means, we are meeting the call the bishop has given us.

If we are going to be a church that serves our community, a church that comes out stronger from the wilderness, we need to find a way to be something more than this building. Because there is a whole



community of people out there who are lonely and seeking. It is time for us to be a Joshua generation. Because Moses freed the Israelites from bondage and led them through the wilderness, but it was Joshua, his aide, who led them to cross the Jordan River. And I believe, like the Lord said to Joshua, she's saying to us "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

— Tom Reynolds



Dear Christ Church Family,

I am grateful! So very grateful! For this sacred space and all of you!

Christ Church is 166 years old! Not all of those years were smooth sailing. Most notably was a fire in 1892 that required the rebuilding of the Church. In our own recent history, we were challenged by a pandemic that placed severe restrictions on our Nursey School and prevented us from celebrating our "Alleluias" in person.

But, like those parishioners in the 1890's, our congregation stepped up. Because of your increase in pledges over the past year, we remain a community that shares our joys and welcomes all who come through our doors. We also remain a place of soft landing, of comfort, of prayer, of peace, of sustenance. We remain!

During the pandemic, our leadership had to make some very difficult decisions including the sacrifice of our endowment. You will hear Mother Diana talk about this. Replacing this is currently one of our biggest challenges. I would ask you to prayerfully consider remembering Christ Church in your "estate". You might ask "What estate?" I, myself, have asked this. I have no home and no car, but I am naming Christ Church as one of the beneficiaries in my retirement fund.

I am reminded of the miracle of the fishes and the loaves where the sharing of five loaves of bread and two fishes fed more than 5000. Each of us might have a fish or a loaf to share, and this might feed those who hunger and thirst for the love of Jesus Christ for generations to come. Let us embrace, pray and proclaim the words, "We remain!"



Merry Christmas, Peace, Good Health and Many Continued Blessings!

— Michelle Ryndak



# Musical Notes

Ryan Bridge, Director of Music



The music ministry has been joined by several new members of staff. I am several months into my role as Director of Music, Laura Cardona has joined as soprano section leader, and Cristina Clare has joined as alto section leader. They join returning section leaders Jeff Stanfill (tenor) and Kaelee Barbone (bass), as well as a small but very dedicated volunteer membership. They have undertaken new choral anthems, and worked particularly hard on a challenging work by Mendelssohn for the Bishop visitation in October, to great effect. Rehearsals are held on Thursdays at 8pm and we are always seeking to expand our volunteer membership.

A beautiful Christmas Lessons and Carols service was held on Sunday, December 22nd at 5pm, offering an expanded choral program. It was a wonderful evening and I'm so grateful to all who participated in the service and to those who got to experience it.



**A youth choir program will commence on January 5th, 2025.** Rehearsals will be held on Sundays at approximately 12:30 depending on the timing of that week's service. Choristers ages 10-17 who can attend 3 out of 4 of the month's rehearsals will join the adult choir to sing the anthem in the last mass of the month, but all are welcome to sing and learn about our great choral tradition.



# The Nursery School of Christ Church

**Aazhae Coleman, Director**

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Can you believe it's already December? The first half of the school year has flown by, and as we wrap up 2024, The Nursery School of Christ Church is gearing up for a spectacular holiday season!



This time of year brings so much joy, and we've had a busy but wonderful few months at NSCC. Our classrooms have been buzzing with exciting projects, showcases, and extracurricular activities. It has truly been a season of learning, growth, and community.

We have had a busy December with our **Annual Dance Recital** and **Holiday Show** taking place on the same day! It was a magical celebration filled with festive songs, dazzling dance performances, and, of course, a surprise visit from

**Santa Claus!** Our students' talents and creativity truly shined through, and it was such a joy to see their excitement as they shared these moments with their families.

But the fun didn't stop there! We've continued to build holiday traditions, like our **second annual school-wide Holiday Pajama Day**, where even the staff joined in on the fun! These special moments remind us how lucky we are to share the holiday spirit with our children and families. It was truly a day to remember!

As we enter the final stretch of 2024, I want to take a moment to thank you all—our students, families, and staff—for making this year so remarkable. While this season brings fun and excitement, it can also come with some stress and chaos, as we all feel the pressure to make everything perfect. But let's remember that what our little ones truly cherish is the **quality time** spent with us. So, If things don't go perfectly—don't worry! Just be present.



Looking ahead, we are excited to continue making memories and building our school traditions. We are already planning for the upcoming **100 Days of School**, **Ash Wednesday Church Visit**, **Read Across America Month**, **Easter**, and of course, our **Graduation** ceremony. But for now, let's enjoy this holiday season to the fullest! Please remember it is your support, love, and community spirit that make this school a special place for our children to grow, learn, and thrive. May this holiday season bring peace, joy, and many blessings to you and your family.

Happy Holidays!

# Children, Youth, and Families

## Candice Whitaker, Director of Family Ministries

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We are so happy to report that we have been able to provide childcare on Sundays again for the last year. Andrea and Candida are sisters and work in our Nursery School. We are so grateful for their presence, which allows parents more options for their worship experience.

Sunday School will resume one Sunday per month when we have volunteers to help lead. Curriculum would be provided and can easily be adapted. The more volunteers we have, the smaller the commitment this would be. If you're interested, please reach out to Candice.

Older children and youth are always invited and encouraged to serve in our worship as crucifers and acolytes. They are also invited to participate in our new Youth Choir beginning on January 5!

Our Kid Kits continue to be an asset in the church. Children have always been welcome in our services but this was just an additional option to make our worship service more kid friendly. The bags contain books, crayons, activities, and quiet toys that allow children to be present in worship even if they are not yet sure how to participate. We continue to have our kid zone in the back of the church, also. There are plenty of books and activities, rocking chairs, and more space for littles to move around, though we do offer childcare for those who wish to utilize it.

As a child or youth of our church, there are several activities, opportunities, and ways to stay connected. We continue to support Cross Roads and stay connected through their various retreats and events for the whole family. The Diocesan Youth Commission coordinates quarterly events for youth in the diocese for grades 6-12. The DYC was very involved at Diocesan Convention this year, and are currently working on their summer programming. These events are always shared in our emails and our Sunday paper, but reach out to Candice for more information on any event.



Hope everyone has a Merry Christmas and I look forward to another great year ahead!



## Outreach Ministries



### Epiphany Project

Christ Church has been a very busy place! We continue to welcome many new and returning groups into our space to use our facilities throughout the week. An outreach project we have done the past few years is the Epiphany Project. When our parishioners make their pledge by December 31 of that year, they receive a check from our outreach funds to then make a donation to a nonprofit of their choice. The season of Epiphany is a time of God's revealing Christ to the world, and we in turn will reveal Christ to our community through these gifts. Each pledger is able to write that check over to the non-profit of their choice. It has been so inspiring to see how our parishioners have spread Christ's light out into the world through this project!

### Diocese of Newark Prison Ministry

In November & December, we collected gifts for our Diocesan Prison Ministry, giving to children whose parents are incarcerated. Thank you to so many of you that contributed! Such a blessing to those families.



### Feeding the Hungry + PAWS Montclair

We had a very successful food drive for the pantry of Holy Spirit, Verona in November. We are so grateful to our seminarian, Jackie, for coordinating everything, and to everyone who generously donated. We were able to collect over 4 car-loads! The food items were collected, blessed at the altar, and then delivered.





We like to help feed our furry friends, too, and we work with PAWS Montclair, the local animal shelter, to provide needed food and supplies throughout the year. We also do a big collection for PAWS at our Blessing of the Animals in October, as pictured left.

### **Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center**

We continue to partner with Crossroads, the official camp and retreat center of our diocese. We have worked with them for several years to provide an awesome day camp in the summer for our kids and kids in the community. A few of our older youth have spent weeks on site for their summer programming. We like to contribute in helping to make camp accessible and as affordable as we can by participating in fundraisers and work days at Crossroads. Their annual Rally for Cross Roads was in October.

The last few years, they have been doing a 5k to raise funds for camp. All ages are invited to participate both near and far, on site or in your own neighborhood. It is their largest fundraising event and it is always so much fun to be a part of.



Another outreach opportunity is to contribute to Good News Gardens – a church-wide movement involved in a variety of food and creation care ministries – gardening, farming, beekeeping, composting, gleaning, feeding, and food justice advocacy. There are a variety of settings and locations, one of those being Crossroads. They are working to expand their Good News Garden and you can support them as volunteer builders, gardeners, harvesters, food bank delivery, or with donations.

### **The Charles Seller Foundation**



In 1950, a young man named Charles Seller was struck by a train losing one of his legs. His family and friends came together to put on a variety show named Talent Time to aid in his medical costs. This started a tradition in Bloomfield, NJ, that has continued on for the past almost 74 years. Each summer their members, who are in their mid-teens to early thirties come together to produce and perform a musical in which all profits go towards someone in the area with high medical bills. The Charles Seller Foundation have held their

rehearsals at our church for the last several years. We host them every summer with additional times as needed. Their performances typically take place at Bloomfield High School. You can learn more about their theater projects at [thecharlessellerfoundation.org](http://thecharlessellerfoundation.org).

**These are just a few highlights – we have so much going on in our community! If you would like to help and get involved with our Outreach Ministries, please contact Mother Diana.**



# Office and Communications

## Candice Whitaker, Director of Communications

### DIRECTIONS



JOIN US FOR  
WORSHIP

### Christmas Lessons & Carols! – Dec 22

On Sunday, December 22nd, at 5pm, Christ Church will be presenting a traditional Christmas Lessons & Carols. An evening of sacred music, readings, prayers, and hymns. Featuring the Christ Church...

[Read more →](#)



MAKE YOUR PLEDGE  
TODAY!



The Parish Office is responsible for all communications and the management of the facilities. It is also often the first point of contact for vendors, visitors, and others looking to know more about the church. We have several groups who use our space throughout the year, and we love being able to give back to our community in that way. We have several groups who use the space regularly throughout the week!

We work very hard to share all the good things that are happening in and out of Christ Church. We are active on social media (@cc74park on all accounts); make sure to follow us and like our page. Our big events are submitted and posted on the Diocesan calendar and events page. We keep our banners updated on Bloomfield Ave. to reflect our latest events, also! In addition to increasing communications within our church, we have worked to update and increase our methods of communications for our Nursery School staff and families as well. We have a monthly newsletter that goes out the 1<sup>st</sup> of every month to our Nursery School families. It includes important updates, calendars and newsletters for each class, activities our students can try at home, and photo highlights from the previous month. We have implemented the use of Class Dojo, which allows for easier and more streamlined communications between the staff, families, and teachers. It has been working out very well!

The best way to stay up-to-date on all the news and updates at Christ Church and in our Diocese is through our email communications. We send out monthly emails to help you stay better connected. If you're not subscribed, or if you have not been getting these emails, simply use your phone camera to scan this QR code to subscribe! All important updates and communications are sent via email, so please make sure to subscribe. You can also visit our website for all the latest news and events happening.

We continue to produce the bulletins and Sunday Papers for every worship service, all of which are uploaded online each week, as is the most recent newsletter. There are plenty of ways to stay connected at Christ Church and we are always looking for the best ways to reach everyone; don't miss out!

Use your phone camera  
to scan the QR code to  
get on our email list



## ***“This season, be gentle with your words...”***

### **From Bishop Hughes, Diocese of Newark**

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*[Diocese of Newark] The following is the full transcript of Bishop Hughes latest message on her Vlog from December 18, 2024.*



This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark, and it is midway through the third week of Advent, which means in just a few days, on Sunday, we'll celebrate the fourth Sunday of Advent, and three days later it will be Christmas. So from this Wednesday to next Wednesday, ready or not, it is coming. And all the preparation that needs to happen between now and then, it'll either get done or it won't get done.

I think the thing that's the most important to remember, particularly at this point – at the crunch point where the finish line is almost there and there's still so much to do – the important thing to remember is the main thing: the gift of Jesus Christ. That God's very self came here in ways that we still do not fully understand, but that somehow we know, deep in our hearts, we know that God came here as that infant that needed so much and that was so vulnerable, and then gave so much. And God sent God's self for each and every one of us, for the whole wide world, but also for us as individuals. I think when we can remember the gift that has been given to us as

individuals, then it changes things. It changes our focus.

In this season, as we prepare and as we travel and as we bake, all the things that we do, spending time with family and friends, in this season of celebration, and also in this season of generosity, where we want to share what we have with others, I want to encourage you to pay close attention to your words. The way we speak to others and the way we speak to ourselves can be an incredible gift at this particular moment. If you're hearing things via social media or via news outlets, if you're hearing the same kinds of things I'm hearing, there's a harshness to them, a hard-heartedness to them, a judgment to them, an ugliness to them, this kind of pointing at other people, entire groups of people, by any one person or any group of people that otherizes them or dehumanizes them. That harshness has nothing to do with the love of God, it just simply does not. And we can't help but when we're met with that harshness, want to return the harshness.

It's an endless cycle, and it can stop at any point when someone says, I'm going to use my words to be gentle. I'm going to use my words to be caring, to be kind, to uplift, to affirm, to let people know that they are loved by me and that they are loved by God. I'll take this even further, that we need to use our words to be kind to ourselves, to be affirming to ourselves. I listen to so many people talk about themselves in ways that are so harsh and judgmental that nobody else needs to ever judge them because they cannot forgive themselves.

But I wonder, in these last seven days as we had to head to Christmas, and then the 12 days of Christmas, if we might do something different and be incredibly generous with ourselves, incredibly generous with our friends, with our families, and abundantly generous with God's people, whose paths we will cross in the next two weeks as we continue to celebrate.



This is a gift. It's a gift that is not costly in terms of your finances. You don't have to budget for it that way, but it is a gift that is costly in terms of our awareness that we need to pay attention. We need to pay attention to the words we use and how we use them, and what it is that we want to do when we speak to people and when we speak to ourselves.

There is a way to change all that is going on around us. It means for us to actively participate in being God-like. To actively participate in having a ministry like Jesus's, where we are constantly talking about God's love and God's mercy.

Know that as you prepare and travel and spend time with your family and friends, I am praying that you have the best holidays ever. And I am also praying that each of us, at every opportunity, blesses someone with words that are kind, loving, caring, affirming, and that in doing that, we help God transform the world.

**“But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”**

***Luke 2:10-12***

The joys of Christmas celebrations are underscored by the effort we make to delight, surprise, and care for those we love. At the center of the shopping, wrapping, cooking, and traveling is love. A love that is expansive because of the birth of Jesus. This is good news of great joy for all people. We are loved truly, deeply, unconditionally by the one who came to us as an infant among the very least. His love of us makes our love of others grow.

You have my prayers for a Christmas overflowing with the unconditional love that Jesus has for all people. May our love expand beyond our family and friends and touch the lives of those needing to be loved.

*Merry Christmas,  
Bishop Hughes*



*The Voice* is the biweekly publication of the Diocese of Newark. It is currently published every other Wednesday. You can subscribe to it here: <https://dioceseofnewark.org/e-news>.



# Our Staff



**THE REV. DIANA WILCOX**  
Rector



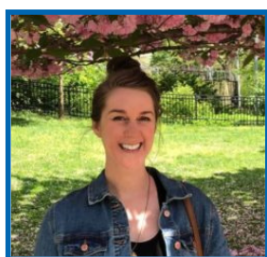
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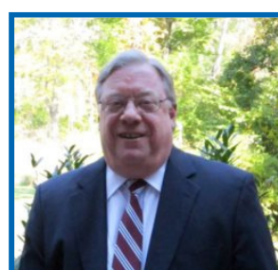
# The Vestry



Michelle Ryndak  
Warden



Tom Reynolds  
Warden



Bill Seeman



Leo Toledo



Alex McClean



Denise Massay- Williams



Carol Madden





## UPCOMING EVENTS AND SERVICES

January  
**5**

The Visit of the Magi

January  
**26**

Religious Life Sunday

March  
**2**

Last Sunday after the Epiphany

## Our Newsletter

We at Christ Church are excited by the new life and transformation in this place, and this newsletter is a part of the many ways we are stepping boldly forward in faith. This newsletter is published twice each year and covers the life of this congregation – worship, music, children & youth, spiritual formation and so much more. Let us know what you think!



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[www.christchurchepiscopal.org](http://www.christchurchepiscopal.org)

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Read our Sunday Paper, an insert in our Sunday Bulletin, which is also located on our website for download to your e-reader, phone, or iPad.

And the best way...come to church!



